

MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
ZONING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 4, 2013 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Marquardt, Sutherland, French, Hudecek, Sayer
Alternate members present: Douglas Smith, William Middleton
Absent: None
Staff present: Glemboski, Galetta

Chairperson Sutherland called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and welcomed two new alternates to the Commission, Doug Smith and Bill Middleton

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF Special Meeting of October 10, 2013.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of Special Meeting of October 10, 2013.

Motion made by French, seconded by Hudecek, so voted unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Staff noted that a letter was received from the applicant withdrawing Special Permit #335, Greg Fedus, Fedus Engineering, 27 West Main Street (CAM).

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion of Revisions to Zoning Regulations for Buildable Land Definition, WRPD, Table of Permitted Uses, Active Senior Housing, and Animals in Residential Districts.

Chairperson Sutherland has been doing research on the buildable land definition. She has been reading as much as she can on the Town of Groton website and looking at what other towns have done. Other towns have very simplistic definitions. Sutherland hopes to coordinate with Staff to make sure there is a consensus. One topic to examine is how to treat exposed ledge.

WRPD Regulations will be worked on with Deb Jones, Environmental Planner. Unfortunately, this will be tabled for a while due to the fact that Deb is working on the POCD Update and additional projects now that the Planning Manager position has been eliminated.

The Commission briefly discussed time limits for building permits and special permits. It was noted that special permits go with the property and there is no expiration date unless the permit has a specified time limit. Building permit time limits are not regulated under zoning.

The Table of Permitted Uses was reviewed by Commissioner Hudecek. The current table is very large and has too much detail. Additionally, some categories are obsolete. Hudecek also did some research on what other towns are doing and expanded it to areas throughout the country. To begin the process, he looked to make changes just for simplification purposes and to consolidate similar categories. This cut the table by several pages without making any

material changes other than consolidation. The Commission discussed whether any further changes are necessary and ways to update the remaining categories. The consensus among the Commission and Staff is that changes are needed so the regulations are easier for the general public and the business community to understand.

Staff noted, when the Commission looks at the individual items in the table and contemplates changes, they also need to consider what impact these changes might have in other areas of the regulations. It was also noted that any changes to the table, even just for consolidation purposes, will require a public hearing.

Staff suggested that the Commission may want to take a look at sections of the table rather than work on the entire document all at once. Staff also noted that the Commission may want to meet with Kevin Quinn who, as the Zoning Official, works with the table all the time and interprets the categories for the specific uses. The Commission asked if they might meet with Quinn at the January meeting. Staff will talk to Michael Murphy the Director to see if something can be arranged.

Commissioner French researched Active Senior Housing regulations. Town of Groton regulations restrict senior housing to age 55 and older with some exceptions which Staff reviewed for the Commission. The regulations also state that it must meet all requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Additionally, the Town has the right, but not the obligation, to review continued compliance with the requirements. French noted that HUD regulations allow families with small children to be excluded from Active Senior Housing. Staff further defined the HUD regulations for the Commission. There was some discussion of potentially changing the Town regulations relative to this issue, and whether this is a priority item that needs to be addressed currently. The Commission consensus was that this is not a pressing topic at this time.

Commissioner Sayer reviewed regulations regarding Animals in Residential Areas. She began her report with dialog regarding whether the Commission wants to contemplate changes to Zoning Regulations relative to chickens alone, such as a neighboring municipality recently did; or tackle the bigger issue of the public desire to eat healthier by growing vegetables and livestock on their own property. The Commission may want to contemplate not just the keeping of chickens but of other animals such as bees, guinea hens, rabbits, goats, or sheep. The Commission feels that this is an issue that is not going to go away and should be looked at thoroughly. The Consensus was for Sayer to continue to work on the project with regard to chickens and maybe address other animals in the future.

2. POCD Update Report

Chairperson Sutherland updated the Commission regarding the most recent Steering Committee meeting. The committee was provided with information by Bill Smith, who has been elected to the RTM and sits on the Economic Development Commission, about economic development initiatives. A colorful build-out analysis was also presented. Sutherland felt it was important to let the Commission know that they are at a critical period in the POCD update, and any information that the Commissioners would like to review more closely should be available on the TOG website.

3. Land Use Regulation Update Project – None

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

Chairperson Sutherland noted that the Zoning Commission has been invited to a meeting with Town Council on December 10, 2013. All the Commissioners are invited to attend particularly those who are interested in giving their views to the Town Council.

2. Receipt of New Applications – None

VI. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON – None

VII. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff continued the initiative of providing the Commission with topical information about contemporary zoning issues by distributing handouts relative to multigenerational housing.

Chairperson Sutherland recused herself from the Whittle Special Permit Update and left at 8:27 p.m.

1. Whittle Earth Products Special Permit #321 – Update

Staff reported that the mediation was not successful and the Town Attorney is now filing a brief. The deadline for filing is December 9, 2013.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:31 p.m. made by Sayer, seconded by Marquardt, so voted unanimously.

Mariellen French, Secretary
Zoning Commission

Prepared by Lynda Galetta
Office Assistant II